3 619

A

LETTER

FROM

NEW-ENGLAND

Concerning their

CUSTOMS, MANNERS,

AND

RELIGION.

Written upon occasion of a Report about a

Quo Warranto

Brought against that

GOVERNMENT.

LONDON,

Printed for *Randolph Taylor* near Stationers Hall, 1682.

A

LETTER

NEW-ENGLAND

A LETTER FROM New England, &c.

SIR,

I Received yours, and ſince that we are informed that a *Quo Warranto* is framing againſt the Government of this place; whether true or falſe I deſire you to ſend word. I doubt not but in the mean time ſeveral of your Diſſenters will think it a little hard, that their Brethren ſhould be perſecuted afar off, as they cry out they are at home; but if they knew, or upon knowledge conſidered, what a ſort of People the Inhabitants of this Colony are, I believe the very worſt of your Enthuſiaſts and Hypocrites would not claim any Kindred with them.

I think it great reaſon that the King ſhould make Inquiry into their Authority, when they live altogether as if they denied his, and impoſe Arbitrary Laws on all Trafiques hither, without reſpect to their Fellow Subjects; and moſt certainly the King has good grounds to ſuſpect their Obedience to him, when they live in ſuch a continual courſe of Debauchery, that by their Actions one would think they were Atheiſts, and as exempt from the Superintendency of God, as they fancy themſelves unaccountable to any Power, by being a Conſtitution within themſelves.

As

As to their Religion, I cannot perfectly distinguish it by name, it being a Hodgpodg of all Heresies and Errors mix'd together, the onely Cement being Hypocrisie and Dissimulation; and nothing keeps 'em Friends, but onely the fear of exposing one anothers Knavery. An Elder is a Mungrel begot by a Jack Presbyter upon the body of an Independent Sister. As for the Rabble, their onely Religion lies in cheating all they deal with, and now and then to be cheated themselves by their Pastors for Conscience sake. In a word, both Teacher and Flock are like Watermen, that look one way and row another; their Eyes are always fixed upon Heaven, while they tread the paths to Hell; and have continually God in their mouths, but the Devil in their hearts and actions. Notwithstanding all their noise and clamour against Persecution, and the reasonableness for a Toleration in Tender Consciences, you may expect more mercy from a *Turk* in his revenge, or fairer dealing from a *Jew* in his trade.

I have seen them whip several of the Anabaptist Principle in one day at the Gun, (the usual Whipping place here) onely for serving God according to their way, as if they would allow no body else to be in the wrong but themselves.

The Quakers are here a very suffering Generation, and hardly one of the *Yea and Nay* Persuasion, but has been abused severely, and three of the most obstinate were tied up; nothing but their Religion being laid to their charge. I would fain know what a bawling about Persecution, free exercise for the Godly, and Liberty and Property, would have been in *England* with you, if such things were acted amongst you as are here daily.

But the most unparallell'd Instance of all is, that though they profess themselves Protestants, their hatred is most generally against those few persons that are according to the *Church of England*; and if any man has the courage to own himself of that Communion, they'll slily threaten him, and study to trepan him into some breach of their Laws, and so make him either fine, or perhaps inflict a bodily punishment. They exact three pounds a year of such

per-

persons for not frequenting their Conventicles ; and if they come to inhabit with their Families, unless the Man or his Wife be a Member of their Church, they very charitably deny Baptism to their Children, looking upon all but their own dear Cubs as the Seed of Pagans and Infidels.

I wonder by what Authority they thus Lord it over their Fellow Subjects, it being directly contrary to the Kings intent, and the Charter of the place ; all Persuasions being allowed by Royal Leave, it being look'd upon as a Situation designed for Trade, not the propagation of their particular Religion.

They have all their Government within themselves in a particular manner ; they choose their own Officers, and have a Court which consists of Eighteen Magistrates, which they call a Court of Justice. These sit as Judges in all matters that tend to the Execution of the Laws, which are always made by a Court of a General Assembly, which consists not onely of the Court of Justice, but of a Deputy chose out of each respective Town belonging to the *Massathensets* Colony. By this General Assembly all Taxes are laid on the People, Laws enacted, &c. Amongst the rest they have a Law, which lays an Imposition on all Goods whatsoever here imported from *England*, which in my opinion is quite contrary to the Laws of *England*, an Act of Parliament being expresly to the contrary ; and certainly they usurp that power, whereby they claim any thing from *English* Goods, that have paid His Majesty's Customs at *English* Ports ; and how they came invested with this Prerogative, I believe they will be put to it to give an account.

I know several have been forced to pay one Peny the Pound, and no redress could be had, they being both Judges and Exactors into the bargain.

They have several good and wholsom Laws as in other places, as against Adultery, Fornication, Cheating, Drunkenness, and Buggery ; but considering their Actions, all their Laws look but like Scarecrows, or for fashions sake. In their practice they outgo the most notorious of Offend-

ers; *Messalina* was chaste in comparison of their lewd and repeated Fornications and Adulteries. For Lying and Cheating they outvie *Judas*, and all the false Merchants in Hell; and the worst of Drunkards may here find Pot-companions enough, for all their pretences to Sobriety. In a word, no Sect of Men upon the face of the earth are so unmannerly, in their outward disclaiming against Vices in particular, and more punctual in the practice of all in general.

The Chastity of the People may be guessed at by the number of Delinquents in that kind; there hardly passes a Court Day but four or five are convened for Fornication or Adultery, and Convictions in this nature are very frequent; after which the fair Convict is sometimes turned over to a Lay Elder, for chastisement for her former sin, and the commission of a new one.

Now most certainly if Justice finds out so many Transgressours in this kind, how many must the private ones amount to? I may without being uncharitable think, they include a great part of the Town; for private sins (as these are) seldom fall under publick censure, or at least not so often as more open ones.

Mr. A——'s Wife has been most notorious, and disgrac'd the whole Herd, by putting the Horns on her Husband, and their Head-leader the old Pastor; who poor man, though he has the Gift of Sanctifying in the Spirit, fails much in Satisfying the Flesh; which gives occasion to his sweet Spouse to straggle abroad for an Help-meet, and once particularly was caught, having been at the Tavern almost all night with a Person well known here, and returning home to the old Gentleman, was encountered by the Watch, to whom (adding one time to another) she pretended she had been upon the search for her Husband, but the Watch smok'd the business; and out of a sense of their own Failings, and her Credit, dismissed her home, not willing to make her a publick Example, lest the wicked should rejoyce, and the uncircumcized triumph at the sweet downfall of a Daughter of Zion.

I could name you ſeveral others, as my Lady *S——ff*, my Lady *P——e*, and young pretty *Mrs. S——*, Daughter to a great Member; *Mrs. C——y*, *Mrs. T——r*, *Mrs. B——ll*, *Mrs. F——n*, *Mrs. R——t*, *Mrs. S——h*, *Mrs. M——s*, and *Mrs. J——n*; all which are Well-willers to the Mathematicks, and can tell how to adorn their Husbands Heads with a Forked Coat of Arms.

And yet further to prove to you how agreeable this ſweet ſin of Leachery is to them, I ſhall give you one Inſtance more, of one who formerly had murdered her Infant here, which was thrown into the Town Dock; the Infant being taken up, the Magiſtrates immediately gave order for the ſearch of all the Women in the Town, to ſee if thereby they could find out the Murderess; now in this ſearch, though the Murderess could not be found out, yet ſeveral of the Religious that went under the denomination of Maids were found with Child.

In ſhort, though this Town hath but three Conventicles in it, the North, the South, and the old one; yet few places of greater extent abounds with more Pimps, Procurers, Panders, &c. than this does; and the lewdeſt of 'em all is one *M——le*.

For Cheating and Lying our Inhabitants are (I believe) ſingular by themſelves, and the Villanies that are committed that way are without number. They make a ſport of it here, look upon Cheating as a commendable piece of Ingenuity, and brag of thoſe vile Actions which others are aſhamed of, commending him that has the moſt skill to commit a piece of Roguery.

There was one *H——n L——tt*, a true Chip of the old Block, (Son to a Perſon notoriouſly known for his dutiful Declaration, in ſaying, that rather than this People ſhould comply with the Kings Power, he'd ſell the Country to the *King of Spain*, in imitation of his Fathers Virtues) being diſpatch'd into the *Weſt Indies* with a Cargo of Goods, to diſpoſe of them as Factor. This Fellow thinking himſelf ſecure amongſt the ignorant *Indians*, proceeds in his old method, and accordingly makes ſale of Twelve Barrels of Flower, at a rate certain by the Hundred weight, and in

four

four or five days the *Indian* comes for the Goods; but no ſooner had my Rogue *L——tt* got his Chapmans back-ſide, but he cauſes the Flower to be repackt, and then filled the Barrels with Stone; by which means he increaſed his ſtore to ſuch a quantity, that he damaged the *Indian* Thirty Pieces of Eight. But he being afterwards found out, was ſued and forced to pay for his Knavery; and if it had not been for very earneſt and importunate Sollicitations made on his behalf to the Governour, he had moſt certainly diſgrac'd the Pilory.

Another Cheat which he committed was thus, and in his own Countrey too: He agrees with a Countryman for a Horſe, and was to pay Four Pounds of *Maſathuſet* Money, and that to become due upon the Day of Election for Magiſtrates, which is held yearly. He underſtanding that the Countryman could not read, makes the Bill under his Hand to be payable at the Day of the Reſurrection of the Magiſtrates, willing belike to take time enough to pay his Debts, or elſe in good hopes the Magiſtrates had no ſhare in that Day. The Countryman however ſues him, and with much trouble and charge recovers his Money.

This Fellow ſince his Father died is reduced to a Morſel of Bread, and in ſo low a condition, that he pimps to moſt of the Whores in *Boſton*. Sometimes he threatens to proſecute Strangers for debauching a Siſter or a Couſin, &c. but ſometimes after all his bluſtering he will be contented with Half a Crown. He has his Mates as bad as he is, and many a Shopkeeper and Tradeſman as bad as himſelf; who are ſo damnably addicted to Lying and Cheating, that it is dangerous for a Stranger to trade amongſt them, without peril of being inevitably ruined.

In whatever any one deals with them, he ſhall be certainly overreached either in goodneſs or value; ſo that it would be the wiſdom of Foreiners to deal with none but the Factors here, who generally bear a good conſcience. And yet amongſt them, all are not honeſt neither: I will inſtance onely in one, who as I have been credibly informed, having a Warehouſe burn'd down not worth to him above 80 *l.* and though he loſt not much by the Fire, yet

the

the Good Man had the conſcience to charge his Correſpondents ſome Hundreds of Pounds for the loſs of their Goods.

In ſhort, Sir, theſe *Boſtonians* enrich themſelves by the ruine of Strangers, and (like ravenous Birds of Prey) ſtrive who ſhall faſten his Talons firſt upon them. But all theſe things you muſt know, Sir, paſs under the notion of Self-preſervation and Chriſtian Policy.

As to their Drunkenneſs, though they have a Law againſt it, yet they are ſo addicted to it, that they doubt whether it is a ſin or no, and ſeldom go to bed without muddy brains. If you come into the company of one in ſuch a condition, you have an infallible Mark to know him by, which is this, you ſhall hear nothing proceed from his mouth but Scripture Phraſe, and when he can hardly ſpeak any thing, he is clearly for Canting. Hence it comes that they are ſo ſilly and extravagant in their Prayers and Ejaculations:

Lord, (ſays one) *I thank thee that thou haſt thus enrich'd thy Servant; what am I, or what is my Fathers Family, that thou ſhouldeſt thus regard me? How haſt thou filled thy Servants Cup, nay it runs over to two hundred pounds? Thou haſt given thy Servant as good an Houſe as the Worſhipful Mr.* T——g *thy humble Servant, nay almoſt as good an Houſe as the Honourable the Governour, but there is not ſo many Bricks, O Lord.*

Lord, (ſays another) *I beſeech thee give me this Cloth; thou haſt promiſed that all ſuch as belong to the Election of thy Grace ſhall not want; I challenge thee therefore on thy promiſe, thou knoweſt (O Lord) I want a Coat, a Pair of Breeches and a Doublet; 'tis true (O Lord) the Cloth is none of mine own, but perſuade the man (O Lord) to give it me.*

Lord, (ſays a third) *thou knoweſt the pride of theſe people, and that it is for the pride of the people that thou haſt brought upon us all theſe Judgments: O Lord, it is for the pride of the people I ſay, O Lord if thou wilt not believe me, do but look upon my Cupboards Head, and there are a Pair of Shooes with long Toes to them.*

I wonder with what impudence theſe people can pretend to Religion; nay a fourth went further, and in the midſt of his Devotion forſooth, when ſome Milk that was

on the fire boil'd over, he left his Prayers and curſt his Boy, crying, *God damn him for a Son of a Whore, did he not ſee the Milk boil over?*

Another was at his Exerciſe, and a Cuſtomer knock'd at the door for a Penyworth of Nails; the Brother ſends the Boy to the door, to enquire who it was; he returns and tells him, 'twas a Cuſtomer for a Penyworth of Nails: ask him (ſays the Good Man) if he will joyn with us in prayer; he goes and returns with a *No*: why then (ſays the Good Man) ſerve him *John*, ſerve him. But of theſe profane Mixtures we have abundance, there being hardly a Shopkeeper in the whole Town without a tang of this Leven.

A ſixth Inſtance I ſhall give you of a Lay Elder, one *W——ll*, as he prayed in the old Conventicle: *Lord*, (ſays he) *thy mercies have been to us manifold, for behold formerly it was but a mere Bog and a Swamp, where our ſtately Townhouſe ſtands; yea (Lord) the Sea and the Tide came up where now our Boys play at Football.*

Now pray (Sir) let me ſee what the Brethren can ſay to theſe things, and what Scripture they have for their Warrant. Now as to the ſin of Buggery, which though it be one of the higheſt nature, yet there be ſome of the Brethren that do love to embrace their likeneſs, (to wit a Beaſt;) chooſing rather to have familiarity with a Beaſt or a handſom Boy, than uſe their own Wives.

Whereof take a ſad Example of an ancient united Member to his Church, in his reſpective habitation, who lived at *New Haven*; he was ſo extremely brutiſh, that he buggered no leſs than five ſeveral Creatures, a Mare, a Cow, a Sheep, a Sow, and a Bitch. His Wife caught him one day buggering a Sow in the Backſide, and threatned him with Juſtice; but he menacing her with Death, ſcared her, and ſo eſcaped that time, and went on in his Villany; till he was detected by two of his Neighbours, who brought him to Juſtice for the ſame, where he confeſſed the buggering the five ſeveral Creatures before mentioned, and was accordingly executed.

I had not given you the trouble of ſo long a Letter, nor raked in ſuch a Dunghil of Filth, but that this ſort of Peo-

ple

ple are apt to ſay, *Stand off, for I am more holy than thou*; and under that cloud ſhall perpetrate the moſt horrid Crimes that ever Hell ſpawned; as Murder, Adultery, Lying, Cheating, Drunkenneſs, and Buggery; all which are but Failings in a Brother or Siſter: though if a wicked man (*aliàs* an honeſt man) ſhould chance to commit the leaſt of theſe Crimes, ſtreight ways all the Volleys of Damnation, that the envious mouth of an Hypocrite can diſcharge on him, ſhall be his lot.

Of things and perſons though I could write much more, yet I ſhall make an end with a Relation of a ſevere piece of Juſtice, done by one that is in Commiſſion for the Peace; A Vintner in *Boſton* put up a new Sign called *The Roſe and Crown*, with two Naked Boys being Supporters, and their Nudities Pendent: the ſight diſturbed one Juſtice *S——r*, who commanded it down; and away were the Boys ſent to the Carvers to be diſmembered: but the unlucky Dog of a Carver ſent them back again two chopping Girles with Merkins expoſed. This enraged the Juſtice more, and the Sign was ſummoned before the wiſe Court, where they gravely determined (to keep the Girles from bluſhing) they ſhould have Roſes clapt upon their Merkins; which is the original of our new Proverb, *Under the Roſe a Merkin*. Sir, I ſhall trouble you no more at preſent, onely that I am

Yours, J. W.

FINIS.